

June 2011



Mountains of Guilin, Guangxi, China

Message from the Director

Greetings!

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of participating in NAFSA's annual conference, which was held in Vancouver. The event itself was a masterpiece of organization and substance!

I was asked to organize a panel on the 100,000 Strong Initiative and how it might work in practice for individual colleges and universities. I invited three leading educators to join me on the panel, each of whom spoke about how they were working to leverage the U.S. government's efforts to expand Chinese studies and study abroad in China at their schools.

Chunsheng Zhang, Vice Provost of the University of North Alabama, told how he turned a \$20,000 grant from the U.S.-China Education Trust, given in support of 100,000 Strong, into over \$80,000 to pay for students to study in China - all within a few months. The story of how he sought additional funds from other departments within the school, from the school leadership and from the local business community is illustrative of how the 100,000 Strong's public-private partnership can work in practice, and how important the active engagement of the university leadership is to the process.

Kassie Freeman, former president of the Southern University System in Louisiana - the only Historically Black College & Universities (HBCU) system in the United States - addressed the unique challenges facing minority students in terms of study abroad. She discussed how HBCUs are using the 100,000 Strong Initiative to assess existing China programs on their campuses and explore ways in which they can expand or create new opportunities for their students to study in China, who are vastly underrepresented in study abroad in general and in China in particular.

Ellen Sayles, Associate Dean for international study at Oberlin College in Ohio, described her effort to undertake an accounting of current China-related programs and ways in which they could be better coordinated, inspired in part by the 100,000 Strong

In this Issue:

- A Message from the Director: Details about the NAFSA annual conference
- Program Highlights - *Study Year Abroad, China*: Program Description, an Interview with the Resident Director, and SYA Student Stories

Enjoy!

NEWS

JUN 2011: [NAFSA blog highlight on the 100,000 Strong Initiative](#)

MAY 2011: [Secretary Clinton's Remarks at the 100,000 Strong Advisory Committee Meeting](#)

NEW! MAY 2011: [Fact Sheet on the 100,000 Strong Advisory Committee](#)

APR 2011: [Secretary Clinton's Remarks at the US-China Consultation for People-to-People Exchange](#)

APR 2011: [US-China CPE Cooperation on 100,000 Strong](#)

FEB 2011: [Secretary Clinton's HBCU Foreign Policy Briefing Remarks](#)

JAN 2011: [ABC News Coverage of Michelle Obama at Howard Event](#)

JAN 2011: [CNN Coverage of Michelle Obama at Howard Event](#)

JAN 2011: [Washington Post Article on Michelle Obama at Howard Event](#)

DEC 2010: [Wall Street Journal Article](#)

NOV 2010: [Chinese Press Coverage of McGiffert Visit](#)

Initiative. Among other efforts, Oberlin is exploring a program that would send its environmental science majors to China for summer study.

Each of the speakers provided practical advice to his/her counterparts in the audience, and generated a good discussion about how public-private partnerships in education can work in practice. We look forward to hearing from other schools about the creative ways they are capitalizing on the 100,000 Strong Initiative to scale up their study abroad in China programs. Please email your stories to 100Kstrong@state.gov.

Every month we highlight a different program that is doing interesting and important work educating Americans in China, as well as students who have participated in these programs. This newsletter focuses on School Year Abroad (SYA), the only full-year program in China for high school students, a group underrepresented in study abroad.

- Carola McGiffert

Carola McGiffert is Director of the 100,000 Strong Initiative and Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

NOV 2010: [Chinese Press Coverage](#)

OCT 2010: [Secretary Clinton's Honolulu Remarks](#)

MAY 2010: [Secretary Clinton's Remarks at Signing Ceremony](#)

NOV 2009: [President Obama Announcement of 100,000 Strong](#)



ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

Citing the strategic importance of the U.S.-China relationship, in November 2009, President Barack Obama announced his goal of seeing 100,000 Americans study in China over four years. This represents a significant increase over current numbers and signals a major investment in the future of U.S.-China relations. In addition, a central objective of the Initiative is to expand access to study abroad programs in China to underrepresented groups, including students from high schools, community colleges and minority-serving institutions.

The Initiative was officially launched in May 2010 by Secretary Hillary Clinton and is strongly supported by the Chinese government. In January 2011, on the occasion of the state visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to Washington, the two nations reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing people-to-people engagement through educational exchanges.

LINKS

[State.gov Information Page](#)
[CSIS US-China Policy Advisory Roundtable Podcast](#)
[Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs IIE OpenDoors 2010 Report](#)



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



School Year Abroad (SYA) – China

School Year Abroad is a secondary-level program which allows students to live with a European or Asian family for an entire academic year while earning U.S. graduation credits and preparing for selective U.S. colleges and universities. Founded in 1964 by Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass., SYA is supported by a consortium of 40 top independent schools across the country.

Each year each one of our schools in China, France, Italy, Spain, Vietnam and Japan enrolls approximately 60 students to complete their junior or senior year of high school. Students come from public and private schools across the United States.

The central elements of SYA – the homestay and an academic program emphasizing foreign language acquisition – ensure that students return home with real mastery of a second language. At the same time, instructors from U.S. schools guarantee that students will not lose ground in their core American courses: math and English. Extracurricular activities and organized travel round out the year.

SYA China, located on the campus of Beijing Normal University High School #2, opened its doors in 1994 and was the first high school or college program in the People's Republic of China with government permission to place students in host families for the entire academic year. The two-and-a-half credit, intensive Mandarin Chinese course is offered at six levels to accommodate the needs of beginning through advanced language students. In addition, students take English, mathematics, Chinese history and Chinese culture, all taught in English by American faculty. Outside the classroom, students participate in a variety of activities and spend approximately 50 days traveling throughout China with the school.

High school students can find out more about how to study abroad with SYA-China by clicking [here](#).

An Insight into SYA and Life in China from SYA-China Resident Director, Frances Fremont-Smith



students.

(Above: Frances and her husband, Lijun Jia, at the Summer Palace in 1981)

So, with such a wide array of experiences and time spent throughout various parts of mainland China, what advice does Frances have about studying abroad? Well, that “people are people, no matter where you go;” everyone has dreams about what they want to do and where they want to go in life. Hence, in the SYA program, students are immersed in Chinese life with their homestay families in order to recognize that language is really only one of the few aspects of life that separates them from their Chinese counterparts. Students are encouraged to continually practice their Mandarin with their host siblings, parents, and friends while away from the classroom. Hence, it is not unusual for students’ language skills to improve greatly, with one year of study in China comparable to two years of studying Mandarin in the United States.

It is for these reasons that Frances recognizes that “the bilateral support the *100,000 Strong Initiative* receives is really great” because it ensures that students in the United States have the opportunity to learn about Chinese culture and study abroad in China. For Frances, *100,000 Strong* “is a terribly important initiative to raise awareness about China,” in order to improve future U.S.-China relations. It is also why programs like SYA-China are so vital to the learning process. Hence, after recently completing her first year as Resident Director of SYA-China, it does not appear that Frances’ journeys in China will be ending anytime soon.

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Emma McGrath – “An Egg Story” SYA China Alumna

Soon after our arrival in Beijing, routines began to develop with our host families. Every day dinner falls around the same time, new sheets “magically” appear on my bed every week, and breakfast is the same every morning. In America, breakfast is one of my favorite meals and in China it is no different. My host family is awesome and has offered me fairly American cuisine every morning consisting of yogurt, mantou (Chinese steamed bread) with peanut butter and hardboiled eggs. Regardless of the innocuous fare, the hardboiled eggs have caused a fair amount of consternation this year.

I have never been a fan of egg yolks and my avoidance of them has confused my family to no end. Several times throughout the year, my host mother has questioned me about why I don’t eat them. In September, I was only able to offer the simple response, 对你身体不好 (they are bad for your health), but as the year progressed I was able to explain doctor’s warnings and the fact that many Americans also avoid them. Even so, I never told them that I actually liked egg yolks, just only when they are runny. As this topic often does, it reoccurred last weekend over my host sisters 17th birthday dinner. This time however, with the addition of a cousin to my family dynamic a breakthrough was reached on the egg front. After I explained yet again that egg yolks are simply bad for you, my host cousin chimed in and added that all the Americans she knows prefer soft boiled and over-easy eggs. It was at this point that I admitted to being a member of that American faction, and all of a sudden chaos erupted. My sister, and my mother simultaneously demanded to know why I hadn’t told them my egg preferences because they too like runny eggs. For the past week every morning I have sat down to breakfast, both my sister and I have received over-easy or soft-boiled eggs. As my mother cooks she smiles and queries the cooking eggs whether or not they are done enough before decidedly



proclaiming, “they’re done,” and taking them off the fire. The egg incident has become quite a joke in my house, but it is these small changes that make me feel like I am truly a part of a family.

When my mother remarked the other morning that I could have at least a month of good eggs, it reminded everyone of the sad fact that I only have one more month left in China. I know every SYA student has their own egg story to tell, and when we return home to America it is these little memories that will remind us of our other homes in China.

Veronica Houk
SYA China Alumna



Living abroad in China this year has taught me that becoming a global citizen does not make me any less a citizen of the US. I was surprised to discover this, as I had assumed that I would return to America either a quasi-fanatic patriot or, to be honest, a socialist. Nine months later, I'm neither.

Yes, I feel more attached to America than ever. Instead of my house in upstate New York, the whole country is my home now. But, unquestionably, so is Beijing. I still feel I should have been in America when the President and his colleagues in the Situation Room made the front pages and flags were paraded nationwide- but I wouldn't trade it for the game of Charades I played with my Chinese roommates during my immersion. Nor would I pawn it for the first time I understood how to burn incense with my family at the Lama Temple or knew how to order my favorite dish of eggplant at a restaurant.

Plainly put, this year is not devoid of ambiguities for me. I still don't know how I feel that the delicious crepes and meat kebabs sold on the street here would violate American health codes even in the trashcan. Nevertheless, there is one matter about which I am resolute: living in China this year was a choice and by no means a sacrifice. I could not have spent my year in a better way.